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# MY ESCAPE FROM THE BOERS

THE EXCITING EXPERIENCES OF A CANADIAN  
MEDICAL MISSIONARY

BY

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## MY ESCAPE FROM THE BOERS.

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IN order to understand the state of affairs in South Africa at the present time it is necessary to look, if but briefly, at the past history of that part of the world; therefore I should like, before entering upon the narrative of my somewhat eventful experiences, to make a brief reference to the origin of the two British colonies and the two Boer oligarchies or republics (so called) which are engaged in the present struggle, and to trace somewhat cursorily the course of events which led to this unhappy strife.

As early as 1648 the Dutch East India Company established a trading post at the Cape of Good Hope. This for one hundred and fifty years was used simply as a port of call or stopping place for ships, at the end of which time it was found that several thousand colonists had come in and settled at the Cape, so that quite a little colony had sprung up. It was also found that the Company was altogether incapable of governing this little colony. Its rule is described as being tyrannical and ineffective. The Dutch East India Company was also involved in financial difficulties in Europe, and sought relief by selling to Great Britain the Cape of Good Hope for the consideration of a certain sum of money. That is how Great Britain got a foothold in South Africa.

The first thirty years of the possession by England of the Cape of Good Hope were years of great prosperity and progress. An immense tide of immigration poured into the country. There grew up a splendid robust and thrifty population of colonists, consisting both of Boers and Britons. These colonists lived and worked side by side and fought shoulder to shoulder through the early part of this century, so that about 1830 it was found that they had spread out hundreds of miles to the east, north and west, and had redeemed from savagery an area of country comprising some 225,000 square miles. This splendid stretch of country was and is yet called Cape Colony.

The loyal colony of Natal, lying to the east of Cape Colony, is bounded on the north-west by the Orange Free State, and on the north by the Transvaal, or, as it is officially called, the South African Republic. Natal has a white population of some 50,000, and a colored population of about 600,000. It was first a dependency of Cape Colony, but afterwards was established under the superintendency of a lieutenant-governor, and was eventually granted responsible government. The race hatreds, which have been and are the bane of South Africa, are here not so bitter as in other parts of the country.

I have said the first thirty years of this century were years of great prosperity and advancement in Cape Colony, and it would have been well if this condition of peace and harmony amongst the white races had continued to the present; but about 1830 clouds began to gather on the political horizon. Three years later there burst over South Africa a storm which from that day to this has blasted its political progress, retarded its trade and commerce, and proved the greatest obstacle in the way of civilizing and Christianizing agencies.

## ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.

Trouble began with the institution of a law by the Government of Great Britain which prohibited slavery. It had been the custom from time immemorial for the Boers to keep slaves. Slavery had been established during the time of the supremacy of the Dutch East India Company, and large numbers of slaves were in the possession of Boers, and I suppose in the possession of the English-speaking people as well; but about 1833 Great Britain passed a law prohibiting slavery in all her colonies, and it was this which caused the first breach between Boer and Briton, and gave rise to that racial hatred which has cursed that country all these generations, and is to a great extent responsible for the present war.

Who can censure Great Britain for passing that law and abolishing slavery? Have not the United States and other countries shed blood and spent money to abolish slavery and wipe out the curse and shame of man holding property in man? and has not Great Britain dealt more generously toward her slave-holders than other nations have done toward theirs? In this case she not only gave the Boers five years to get rid of their slaves, but paid them over in actual cash a sum of money which represented thirteen shillings on the pound of the actual market value of the slaves. But the Boers did not want the money—they wanted their slaves. It is the pride and ambition of the Boer to fight and to hunt, but he must have slaves to do his work. Deprived of these by the English, they began to hate Englishmen and everything that was English. Not content to remain longer in a country where their liberty, or license rather, was circumscribed, they decided to seek a country where they might indulge their evil passions untrammelled by

the restraints of law. They disposed of their property in any way they could, packed their household goods into their great canvas-covered waggons, gathered together their flocks and herds, and, like the patriarchs of old, set out northwards into the new country. During the three years after the coming into force of the law for the abolition of slavery, trains of waggons drawn by long teams of oxen might have been seen toiling patiently across the plains and climbing the mountains toward the north. Making their way across the Orange and the Vaal rivers, they settled in the country which eventually became known as the Free State and the Transvaal, though for more than twenty years they were still looked upon as British subjects.

#### INDEPENDENCE GRANTED.

About 1852, when England was busy suppressing native troubles, and the Boers saw that her hands were tied, they concluded that the time had come to strike. They rebelled, and in 1854 were granted their independence. That part of the country lying along the Orange River, and extending as far north as the Vaal, was called the Orange Free State, with its seat of government at Bloemfontein; and that part of the country lying north of the Vaal was called the Transvaal, with its seat of government at Pretoria.

The period from about 1854, the time of the granting of their independence to these republics, up to 1877 was one of very great prosperity and progress in Cape Colony and in Natal, but it was not so in the Free State or in the Transvaal. In the latter, particularly, the Boers had lapsed into the inferior morality of the previous century. They tried once more to make slaves of the natives, and quarrelled with the

native chiefs on every side of them. In 1877 it was found that the Boers were quite incapable of managing the affairs of their country. They were impoverished by constant fighting with the natives, and there was not money enough in the treasury to pay the carriage on ammunition from Durban to Pretoria. Transvaal one-pound notes sold for one shilling, and Paul Kruger had not enough money to pay his hotel expenses. That was twenty-two years ago. It is a striking tribute to the thrift—shall we call it?—of the Boer president, that he, who had not enough money at that time to pay his hotel expenses and had them paid by a generous Englishman, is now worth £20,000,000, or about \$100,000,000. The story is related that the other day, when an insurance agent called upon him to induce him to insure his life, the frugal Boer president told him he had “laid up his treasures in heaven.” Granting him this, we yet are forced to admit that he has been not unmindful to keep on friendly terms with the mammon of unrighteousness!

## THE ZULU WAR.

In 1877, not only was the Transvaal in poverty, but it was about to be swallowed up. The great king Cetewayo was mustering his impis for an attack. He had thousands and thousands of stalwart warriors ready to fight, but when the Boers saw they were about to be annihilated, they appealed to Great Britain, and Great Britain stepped in between the Boers and their enemies and saved them.

For this generous act on the part of Britain she was treated to the great Zulu war of 1879-80, in which she lost more than two thousand lives and spent millions of money. Cetewayo sent most pathetic messages to the English generals. He said,



"I do not want to fight the English ; the English are my brothers. The Boers have quarrelled with me and made slaves of my people. They have tortured me all these years. They have bitten me, and I want to square accounts and clear off old scores with them. Stand aside and let my men and the Boers have it out." But the English would not stand aside. They annexed the Transvaal and established the Queen's authority, and stood between the Boers and their enemies. Cetewayo could not restrain his men, and they swooped down upon the English troops, and the result was the long and sanguinary Zulu war.

How did the Boers regard this noble action on the part of Great Britain ? The Zulu war was hardly ended when they began again to give trouble. Once more they demanded their independence, and to the disgrace of the Colonial Office, be it said, they were granted this in 1884, subject to the conditions of the Convention of London ; and while I say it with all reverence and respect to the late Mr. Gladstone, there can be no doubt that the retrocession of the Transvaal to the Boers was the greatest mistake in the whole of the political career of that noble statesman. It caused a pang in the heart of every British subject in South Africa, and is amply proving the fact, known by the colonists out there long ago, but only now being forced upon the minds of the British people, that the policy which England pursued towards the Boers during the last fifty years, the policy of kindness and generosity and peace at any price, was a total failure.

Before I went to Africa, I heard a missionary from the Pacific coast say that the better you treat an Indian the worse he will treat you. I do not know whether that is true of the Indian, but I believe it is true of the Boer. All the time I was

in South Africa I was being constantly reminded of the words of that missionary. My impression of the Boer is that the firmer you are with him the more deeply and truly will he respect you. The moment you try to make peace with him he gets it into his head that you are afraid of him, and that he can do as he likes with you.

However terrible the mistake may have been in handing the Transvaal back to the Boers, we can only exonerate the Colonial Office from blame in the matter on the ground that it was done with the worthiest of objects, for the purpose of bridging over the gulf between the two races, wiping out the racial hatred which had existed from the time the Boers had left Cape Colony, and welding them into one loyal people. But in this it has been a total failure, for they are now trying to crush the very power to which they owe their existence as a nation. From 1884 to the present time there has been a reign of terror in the Transvaal, that could only end sooner or later in war.

#### CAUSES OF THE PRESENT WAR.

So far as the cause of the war is concerned, it may be looked at from two sides. The Boers think they have grievances. First, there was the unpardonable offence of the law abolishing slavery. They could not do without slaves. They were bound not to work. The Boer does not really know how to work, any further than to attend to his horse and to shoot wild game for biltong (dried meat). He wanders around all winter with his cattle searching for good grass. While his slaves attend to the cattle, he occupies himself in shooting game on the veldt.

Another thing that the Boer considered a grievance was the law which placed all races on one level, so far as the law courts

were concerned. It had been the custom of the Boer to have one code of law for the black man and another for the white man; but Britain said, "What is right for one is right for another. If it is wrong for a slave or black man to steal, it is wrong for a Boer to steal. We will apply the same law to both." This was considered one of the sorest grievances.

Then there is that incompatibility of taste and character which exists between the two races. The Boer wants more room than he can possibly have in this world at the present time. There are too many people in South Africa for the existence of the Boer in his natural state. He does not want to count his land by acres. About the smallest farm that a Boer possesses is from eight to ten thousand acres. He likes to say that it is his from this mountain to that mountain, and then to have the right to go wherever he likes besides.

Another factor was the impoverished condition of the Transvaal treasury. They could not get along without the Outlanders and the English-speaking people. They invited these people to come to the Transvaal to develop the mines, and when they had gone to the Transvaal and opened up the wealth of minerals and enriched the treasury, the Boers began to wonder how to get rid of them, and they commenced the reign of terror which has lasted from 1884 to the present time.

#### OPPRESSION OF THE OUTLANDERS.

A great deal has been said and written about the grievances of the Outlanders. President Kruger could not live with these people—they were going to take the country from his people by-and-bye—and yet he could not live without them. So he set about framing laws that would keep them down.

One of these was that regulating the payment of taxes, by which nine-tenths of all the taxes collected in the Transvaal are paid by English-speaking people—that is, by the Outlanders. And yet they have no voice in the affairs of the Republic!

Another unjust law was that prohibiting the teaching of the English language in the schools of the Transvaal, and the Press law, by which all the newspapers were absolutely at the mercy of the President of the Transvaal. The papers were not allowed to publish anything that would injure the reputation of the President or that of any of his political satellites. There was also the Franchise, and a score of other laws. Outlanders were not allowed to hold a meeting of more than seven. I will dwell for a moment on the Franchise law. If a foreigner comes into this country, or into the United States, or into most countries, after a couple of years of residence and good character he is allowed to have a vote. If you want to vote in the Transvaal, first of all you take the oath of allegiance renouncing and relinquishing forever all citizenship in your own country, and then you remain for fourteen years a citizen of no country whatever, during which time you are liable to serve in the Boer army on twelve hours' notice without pay. Then after these fourteen years' probational service, your petition has to be sanctioned by two-thirds of your Boer neighbors, by the military leader of the district, and also by the President of the Transvaal himself. But this is not all. One more straw was required to break the camel's back. Suppose you have renounced the citizenship of your own country, have lived a blameless life in the Transvaal for fourteen years, had the petition sanctioned by the two-thirds of your neighbors, by the military leader of your district, and by the President of the

State, then after all that you still are not allowed to vote unless you are forty years of age. If any man will tell me such a law would be tolerated by any people who love liberty, I will beg leave to differ with him.

Worsfold says in his "History of South Africa": "Let us do justice to the Boer. Let us acknowledge the reality of the original grievances which drove him beyond the limits of the British jurisdiction; let us admit the magnitude of the services which he rendered to South African civilization by destroying the murderous power of Dingaan, and driving the Matabele hordes beyond the Limpopo; let us forget the occasions on which he lapsed into the inferior morality of the previous century in the treatment of the natives; let us freely admire the determination and the intrepidity which he displayed in defence of his independence.

"We may do all this and still feel that something is wanting to justify him in the occupation of the fairest districts of settled South Africa. He has won his promised land from the heathen. But he has still to justify his possession of these ample pastures, these rich and fertile valleys, and these stores of gold and of coal.

"If he can enlarge his mind, if he can reform existing abuses, if he can expand an archaic system of government and render it sufficiently elastic to meet the requirements of an enlarged population and important and increasing industries—well and good. If not, let the Boer beware, for he will place himself in conflict with the intelligence and progress of South Africa.

"Then the Boer system will be condemned by a higher authority than the Colonial Office or the opinion of England; and from the high court of Nature—a court from which no appeal lies—the inexorable decree will go forth, 'Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?'"

## UNBLUSHING CORRUPTION.

I will make a brief reference to the corruption which existed just before the war broke out. I refer now to circumstances which came directly under my own observation. A man could not be in South Africa during the last four or five years, unless he had his eyes and ears closed, without becoming conversant with a few facts such as I am now going to set forth, instancing the corruption which existed there before the war commenced.

President Kruger passed another law, not so directly antagonistic to the Outlanders, but which shows the sort of man President Paul Kruger is. This was a law depriving the judges of their liberty. It simply meant that when a case was tried in a court before the judges, if an appeal was taken from the decision of that court, the appeal could not be made to the Chief Justice or to any higher court, but must be made to the President of the Transvaal, who was the supreme head over all. That law simply meant that his friends, if they were convicted of any crime, had but to appeal to the President—an appeal couched in the potent form of good Transvaal bank notes—and they were set free.

I knew an instance which occurred not far from the borders of Natal. A miller had a prosperous business. About three years ago the man died, and the business was continued by his widow. There were some sharpers among the Boers who wanted to buy this business from the widow, but she refused to sell. They persisted in making her offers very far below the value of the property, trying to persuade her to take a very small sum and turn the property over to them. It was a paying business, and she was resolved to hold it. Not succeeding in inducing her to sell the business, they tried to

frighten her out; but when they could not succeed in that, a number of the Boers disguised themselves, and entering the house, destroyed everything in it, and succeeded in convincing the widow that the only way to escape was to flee from the place.

This affair came to the knowledge of the police authorities, and they succeeded in capturing the men who had been guilty of the outrage. It happened that the magistrate before whom these men were brought was a just man, and he gave them pretty severe punishment in the form of imprisonment and payment of fines. Then what did these men do? They appealed to Oom Paul, President of the Transvaal. The result was, that by quietly paying him a part of the fines that they would have had to pay to the Courts, the President reversed the decision of the magistrate, and not one of them ever paid his fine or served a day in prison.

#### THE REFORM COMMITTEE.

I come now to the trial of what was known as the Reform Committee. These abuses of the Outlanders were so oppressive that they tried the experiment of making petitions to the authorities of the Transvaal for redress. One petition after another went up, signed by thousands and thousands of Outlanders, and they were promised reforms to a certain extent; but these were never granted, and after this promising and not fulfilling had gone on for a certain time, a number of the Outlanders combined together to get their grievances redressed in another way. They formed a conspiracy, and intended to get arms and ammunition, and somehow or other to convince the President that they would have their grievances redressed.

The Transvaal authorities discovered the conspiracy, and arrested sixty of the Outlanders, including six citizens of the United States of America. Four of these men arrested were looked upon as prominent leaders. They were lodged in jail, and told if they would plead guilty to a certain charge they would not be hanged or imprisoned, but would be let off with fines.

The judge on the bench at that time was not sufficiently corrupt to suit the purposes of President Kruger, so he imported a more unscrupulous man.

This judge did not conceal the fact that he came there for the express purpose of making it hot for the Outlanders. They, believing that they would be let off with fines, pleaded guilty, but the judge said that he would not sentence them according to the statute law, but according to the unwritten law of the Transvaal which prescribed death for such offences; so four of the leaders were condemned to death. But when this was known, the better class of Boers rushed to Pretoria, wondering why these men were to be killed, and the public raised such an uproar that Oom Paul saw he had overstepped the bounds of prudence. Realizing that it would not do to kill these men, and in order to keep peace in the republic and amongst his own people, he graciously took the matter under consideration, and said he could not commute the sentence of death into fines, because to take fines in that case would be taking blood-money, which would be contrary to his own conscience and contrary to the usages of the priests of Jerusalem. Resort must be had to means well tried and familiar. The men were approached by the colleagues of Mr. Kruger, and told that the sentence of death could not be commuted into fines, but if these sixty men, including the four ring-leaders, would



of their own free will and pleasure subscribe certain sums of money to the charities of the Transvaal—which sums of money would be fixed by these satellites—they would be allowed to go free. Of course, it was a good time to be charitable, and these men agreed to subscribe moneys to the charities of the Transvaal. One prominent citizen of the United States (I believe his name is Mr. John Hayes Hammond) subscribed the handsome sum of \$100,000. That was his forced contribution. The others subscribed sums from \$25,000 up, and the least sum that was subscribed by anyone, of his own free will, to the charities of the Transvaal was \$10,000. These men actually paid the donations to the charities, and were allowed to go free. What became of all this money—about a million dollars—no one knows but President Kruger and his sons-in-law, and they have never given any account of it.

#### A PETITION SENT TO GREAT BRITAIN.

This matter of grievances and attempts to obtain redress went on year after year until the petition sent by twenty-two thousand British subjects on the Rand was presented to Britain for assistance. A great deal of correspondence passed between Paul Kruger and the Imperial authorities, but, as you know, did not result in anything. Then the conference at Bloemfontein between President Kruger and Sir Alfred Milner was arranged, but did not have any practical result, these things simply serving to give the Boers a little more time. They had been preparing for the war for at least ten years. Right under the eyes of the Imperial officials in South Africa there passed immense amounts of ammunition and arms and guns of all sorts into the Transvaal, and although this

matter was reported by them it was never thoroughly taken to heart by the people in Great Britain, so that the Boers were allowed to continue this arming and taking in of ammunition through the English colonies. When they had all the munitions of war they thought they would require, they immediately shut off all intercourse with England, presented an ultimatum, and sent all their troops—about 80,000, I believe, in all—across the border, and commenced the raiding in Cape Colony and Natal.

#### THE OUTBREAK OF WAR.

The people in the northern part of Natal (and I suppose in the northern part of Cape Colony, also) passed through troubles and trials such as, it is to be hoped, will never fall to the lot of the people in any British colony again. They had to leave the northern towns on very short notice, in any way they could. The one railway of the colony was not sufficient to carry the helpless men, women and children out of the country. They had to travel by ox-waggon, on horseback, on foot, or by any and every means they could, to get out of the way of the onward march of the Boers. The inhabitants of the little town of Dundee, men, women and children, escaped in the night; mothers with babes in their arms tramping through drenching rains, along flooded roads, without food or shelter. Some of my own personal friends in Dundee were nine days hiding amongst the rocks and woods of Natal before reaching a place of safety, and were almost entirely without food.

#### LADYSMITH AND ITS ENVIRONS.

I lived two and a half years in Ladysmith, and know a good deal about the country there. Nearly all the bridle paths are

familiar to me. All honor to General White, who with nine thousand men bravely kept at bay twenty thousand demons of Boers all these months !

If you were to stand in the Market Square in Ladysmith, you would find just behind you a large hill about four hundred feet high. The town lies right against the hill on the north—some of the houses are built into the side of it. The white population of the town is about one thousand five hundred, and the natives number anywhere from two to three thousand. Looking from the Market Square you see a plain stretching four or five miles to the south, two or three miles to the east, and about the same distance to the west. Over to the west you can see the hills rising once more, these leading in a constant chain to Spion Kop ; while away to the east you see Bulwana Hill, on which the Boer guns were posted. If they had the guns there which they were supposed to have, I do not see why they had not knocked Ladysmith all to pieces, because if that hill had been placed there for the purpose of having guns mounted upon it to dominate the town it could not have been better placed for the purpose than it is.

The Klip River comes down the west side and around the south of Ladysmith. There is a valley in that elbow of the river, and I believe the helpless people dug trenches and pits in that flat, and remained there most of the time while Ladysmith was being bombarded.

If you were to go out of Ladysmith straight west, you would pass over what is called the Red Hill, about two miles distant, it being a continuation of the hill directly behind the town. Then you would ride across a flat for five or six miles before approaching the nearest range of Spion Kop. This same road turns around the south side of Spion Kop, and goes

down south to Colenso. On the west side of Spion Kop is the Tugela River. At one time I attempted to cross the Tugela River when it was swollen with rains, and nearly lost my life. I came out on one side of the river, and my horse on the other.

The reason General Buller was unable to relieve Ladysmith by going east to Grobler's Kloof and coming in on the east side, is that there is a range of mountains and the two rivers, the Tugela and the Klip, in the way. The Drakensburg mountain lies to the west, towering to an immense height, and only passable at certain places, so that it was impossible for him to come further west.

The first attempt was made straight up from Colenso, whence the waggon road leads direct to Ladysmith, eighteen miles away. The second attempt was made through a little valley along the river; they went through that valley to the northern point of Spion Kop, and tried to enter Ladysmith from the northern extremity of Spion Kop, but were forced to retire.

The third attempt was made directly south-west of Ladysmith, where there is what is called a "neck" between Spion Kop and Grobler's Kloof, and it was from this neck that he attempted to cross; but it was impossible to get out of the range of guns posted on the adjacent hills to the right and left. But I am not quite sure that General Buller was anxious to reach Ladysmith. I believe his object may have been to do as much harm as possible to the Boers, and keep them busy there while other plans were maturing.

#### I TAKE UP WORK IN ZULULAND.

I now come to the relation of my own experiences with the Boers. Shortly after the outbreak of the present war, in the

month of May, 1898, I left Ladysmith, and, having an appointment under the Natal Government, went up as medical officer into the district of Qugwavuma, Zululand. There were twenty-five or thirty thousand natives there, who had never heard the Gospel, and amongst these I carried on medical missionary work.

Just before the war broke out we were pretty well assured that, when war would be declared, the Boers from some part or other would come to that place and attack us. We were convinced of this fact not only from rumors which reached us from native sources, but by the fact that the Boers have always been threatening that district, for the simple reason that at one time, when it was in the sole possession of the native chiefs, the Boers did everything in their power to get possession of it, because by it they would have access to the sea. The Transvaal and the Free State are hemmed in on every side, and by getting this strip of territory they would have a good harbor on the east coast, at Kosi Bay. The natives, however, would not cede it to the Boers, but handed it over to the English Government, and ever since that time the Boers have had a spite against that district and have often vowed to attack it.

#### AN INCURSION EXPECTED.

We were pretty well convinced that they intended to come up there and pay us a visit, but there was not very much we could do except wait for them. Our border on the west was Swaziland and the Transvaal. There is a mountain 2,000 feet high there, with few passes over which it is possible to travel. It was our intention to get together a few natives and take possession of those passes; and, had we done so, I am quite

sure the Boers would never have entered Zululand at that point. There were only four white men there—the magistrate, the clerk of the court, the police officer, and myself. But the Government did not wish us to employ natives at that time. They tried to persuade us that the Boers would not come, and that we ought to stay there, and so they refused to let us employ natives. There was nothing for us to do, then, but to “sit tight,” as we call it, until we got sight of our enemies. They came on the 29th of October, the Sabbath day. It has been said by some wit that the Boers keep the Sabbath day and everything else they can get their hands on. On this occasion they neglected the former, but adhered strictly to the latter. About three hundred of them were seen about six miles from the Magistracy. There were no buildings there but the Court House and the Government buildings, the residence of the Magistrate, my own, and the residences of the other two white men. These Boers were approaching the Magistracy at about ten o'clock in the morning, about the hour when they ought to have been going to church. There was nothing for us to do but to leave the place. It was useless for four of us and twenty-five Zulu police to offer resistance.

## THE OFFICIALS ESCAPE.

The magistrate, the clerk of the court and the police officer hurriedly slipped away into the bush and hid themselves in a bit of thick scrub a couple of miles from the Court House; but as I had treated quite a number of these Boers, and was well acquainted with some of them, and was there purely as a non-combatant and physician, to heal the sick and preach the Gospel, and, moreover as I had never taken up arms against any

man or country, I did not feel the same need of haste. Packing up a couple of boxes I gave them to my native servants, two Zulu boys, threw a pair of blankets over my horse's neck, and rode quietly along the path leading away from the Court House in the opposite direction to that by which the Boers were approaching the Magistracy. My horse, a very spirited animal, was restive under the unusual load I had placed on his neck, and when about two and a half miles from the Court House I dismounted, took the blankets off, and was folding them up in order to give them to my servants to carry.

#### CAPTURED BY THE BOERS.

Meanwhile a party of seventy-five Boers had struck off from the main body, and had gone round into what we call "the low country," for the purpose of cutting the telephone wires. Having done this, they approached the Magistracy along the same path by which I was leaving it, and as I knew nothing of their movements, they came suddenly upon me while I was dismounted and engaged in folding my blankets, and were within twelve or fifteen yards of me before they saw me or I them. When I looked up, it was to see some seventy-five rifles pointed at me. Realizing that to fly was useless, and to offer resistance would be insane, I determined to make the best of it, and walked quietly towards them, while they still held their rifles pointed at me. As I approached they lowered their guns, and one of them stepped out and shook hands with me, saying, "Well, Doctor, you may thank your stars I am here, or you would have been a dead man. You were just about to be shot, when I persuaded them not to kill you." He told me that the Boers had wanted to kill me, but he had prevented them. This

man could speak English very well. I was well acquainted with him. He had been in the district occasionally for about six months previous to the outbreak of war, and held a license as a labor agent. Nearly all the laborers in the mines are natives, and they are secured by these labor agents. This exceptionally intelligent Boer had been pretending to act as labor agent, while in reality he was a Transvaal spy, and instead of inducing the natives to work in the mines, he was spending his time in learning the roads and paths about that part of the country. During this time I had made his acquaintance, and had looked upon him as a man of some honor. Just before the outbreak of war he had breakfasted with me one morning. Whether on this occasion they would have shot me or not, I do not know, but certain it is they appeared very angry and excited. They applied to me many epithets more forcible than polite, among which I heard the term "rooinek" (red neck), a name they give all Englishmen. After a little time their wrath seemed to cool, and they quickly commanded my horse and saddle, my boxes, and two boys, and told me to sit quietly down on the ground, placing a guard of four men to watch me. These four men sat uncomfortably near me, with their rifles loaded, and I could see they were determined I should not escape.

The remainder of the seventy-five then rode off among the hills in search of stock. There had been about five hundred head of cattle in this district, most of them belonging to a friend of mine; but I had taken the liberty of sending them down to Natal just a few days before this, so that the Boers were disappointed in their search.

I was taken prisoner about noon, and during the afternoon of that day these men continued their search for cattle, occa-



sionally returning to apply salutations to me that were anything but agreeable, and demanding I should tell where the cattle were.

#### WANTON DESTRUCTION.

In the meantime the rest of the commando arrived at the court-house, looted it, and looted also the houses of the magistrate, the clerk of the court, the police officer, and my own house. They secured everything that was of use to them, and then set fire to and utterly destroyed every building about the place, even the old stables and the huts of the native police. It was to me a by no means agreeable sight on that calm, beautiful Sabbath day, as I sat in uncomfortable proximity to the muzzles of the Boer rifles, and looked across the romantic ravines and sloping hills of that most lovely part of South Africa, to see one lot of Boers riding about in search of cattle, while the others removed the effects from the houses, and presently to see clouds of smoke ascending in the calm atmosphere from my own dwelling-house. What made it the more trying was the fact that the position in which I was placed rendered me utterly helpless, unable to lift my hands to prevent the wanton destruction by the unprincipled renegades and outlaws who had congregated there to gratify their passions for revenge and plunder. As the sun went down and the darkness deepened, the glowing heaps of ruin made the scene strangely weird. The night grew intensely dark. No glimmer of a star could be seen, and a dense coast fog prevailed, adding to the discomfort and gloom.

## MY CAPTORS ENJOY A FEAST.

The Boers who had been in search of cattle now returned, off-saddled their horses, and began to prepare food for themselves by catching and cooking the magistrate's chickens. The magistrate was a great fowl fancier, and had been particularly fond of these chickens. I do not know what would have been his feelings had he been a witness to the way in which those ruffians thrust into his own pots the beautiful fowl in a half-cleaned condition. For myself I own to a pang of regret that the Boers did not offer to share them with me when cooked, as I had eaten nothing since early morning, and was beginning to feel the cravings of a healthy appetite. About this time my guards were relieved and their places taken by other four, who continued to keep a close watch on me. As I sat there on the cold ground, in close proximity to my uncommunicative companions, I began to take a full grasp of the situation. The fact that I was a prisoner in the hands of the Boers dawned upon me in its full meaning. To be helpless in the clutches of such an unprincipled lot of renegades, who knew neither discipline nor honor, and were ruled by no law but that of their own passions, was no enviable position, and as I sat there I began to turn matters over in my mind. I immediately concluded that the treatment which I might expect from them would be anything but pleasant. The next morning in all probability they would start with me to Pretoria. During the journey thither, seeing these men were nothing but the scum of South Africa, and not responsible to anybody, they might put an end to me if they should lose their temper from any cause whatever. If I reached Pretoria I would be lodged in jail, and probably have to lie there for month after month ;

would run the risk of falling a prey to disease or want, and also stand the chance of losing my life in the end when the English bombarded Pretoria. Then I asked myself the question, What will my chances be if I attempt to escape? The night is intensely dark; I have ridden or walked over this ground almost every day for eighteen months, am familiar with every inch of it, know every stone and shrub and tree for several hundred yards around. Within fifty yards of me there are quite a number of large rocks, and amongst these a spring of water rises, and close to the spring a bunch of shrubs and several large trees, as well as a sudden break in the ground, where it slopes into a ravine. Also, I know the country pretty well between here and the nearest British police station, one hundred and forty miles away. I know the natives in this district, having vaccinated nearly twenty-five thousand of them. I know the ways of the natives, and speak their language well, am in the best of health and able to rough it. If I attempt to escape, and fail, I am certain to be shot. If I succeed in escaping I will be able to make my way to the nearest outpost of the British police.

#### I RESOLVE TO ESCAPE.

The main body of the Boers were scattered about, some a few yards away, but none of them more than one hundred yards from the spot where I was. Some were lying down asleep, others engaged in attending to their horses, while certain of them were engaged in disposing of whatever food they could lay their hands on. My four guards with their loaded rifles were almost within arm's length. Grim, sullen fellows they seemed, scarcely exchanging a word with each

other. Nevertheless, the alluring thought of escaping had taken possession of me, and as the desire to regain my liberty became more and more intense, I made up my mind to part company with the Boers even at the risk of being shot in the attempt. Then I thought of my two native servants. One of these belonged to a kraal near by, and would look after himself; the other was a Christian Zulu, who had been with me four years, had served me faithfully, and had stayed by when I was taken prisoner, making no attempt to run away or secure his own safety. So I said to myself, I will not try to escape unless I get the chance to speak to this boy. He was then engaged in carrying water for the Boers, and once when he was passing close by with a bucket of water, I spoke to my guards in the Zulu language, saying I was thirsty, and asking them for a drink. They called the boy, and as there were no cups or glasses, I asked him to raise the bucket so that I might take a drink. He did so, and as I pretended to drink, I whispered a word in his ear which gave him to understand that I intended to make my escape, and wished him to do the same.

## A DASH FOR LIBERTY.

By this time the fires that had been lighted for cooking purposes had pretty well burned down, so that dense darkness reigned on every side. Presently one of my guards laid his gun on the ground and commenced to stir the embers of the fire, which had almost died out. Two of the others were sitting with their rifles across their knees, and the fourth was resting the butt of his on the ground, with the barrel in his hand. At this moment my courage had risen to the point of recklessness. The hope of once more gaining liberty thrilled every fibre in my

being; the thought of remaining in the hands of my captors became intolerable. I calculated with almost mathematical accuracy the length of time it would take my guards to raise their guns and fire, and also the length of time it would take me to reach the rocks. Then I sprang to my feet, dashed into the darkness, and before my startled companions had recovered their presence of mind, I was lying on my face amongst the stones, fifty yards away. I lay thus prone on the ground for a few seconds for fear of being shot. My guards had been so taken by surprise they did not shoot, but raised a wild howl, and instantly the whole company of three hundred Boers were in an uproar. I sprang up, leaped across the little stream of water, and ran at my best speed for a couple of miles, away through and beyond the ravine. As I ran I had many falls and received many bruises, but these were nothing compared with the satisfaction of knowing that I had foiled my enemies. I made for the kraal of a native who was a particular friend of mine, for the purpose of having him come with me to assist in evading the Boers if they should attempt to follow me. Unfortunately he and his family had cleared out that afternoon when they saw the Boers coming. I entered one of the huts, took a native walking-stick and a water-bottle (the native water-bottles are simply the dried shell of a calabash, the inside being scraped out), filled the latter with fresh water, and started off on my tramp of one hundred and forty miles to the nearest British police station. I dared not follow any path for fear of being pursued, and the remainder of that night's toilsome journey lay across trackless hills and wild ravines; among long coarse grass and shrub, wet with the dew and the fog; over stones and through dongas, sometimes in an erect posture, sometimes on my hands and

knees, but always pushing forward. Darkness was succeeded by dawn, and dawn by the glaring light and burning heat of the tropical sun, but I continued to press on, enduring the pangs of hunger, until the middle of the afternoon, when, weak and tired, I arrived at a native kraal, and sank down under the friendly shade of a palm tree.

## HOSPITALITY OF THE NATIVES.

This was about three o'clock on Monday afternoon, and I had had nothing to eat from early Sunday morning. The old Zulu woman at the kraal immediately recognized me, saw the condition I was in, and hastened to prepare some food for me by killing and cooking a chicken. Then she sent her little boy to call the nearest chief. When he arrived and had heard my story, he called up his indunas (head men), and after I had rested a little, and had partaken of the much needed food, I again pressed forward. These indunas acted as scouts, and splendid scouts they are, some of them walking with me, others running forward and thoroughly scouring the country in every direction, in order to prevent a surprise and recapture in the event of being pursued.

About dark we reached the Pongola River, which is one of the largest rivers in South Africa. At this time it was swollen, and, as there are no bridges over it, it was quite impassable to either man or beast. There was, however, a boat, which had been put there by the Government for the use of officials, and was in charge of some trained natives. These natives took me across, and then took the boat away from the river and hid it in the bush, so that if the Boers should come along they would not be able to cross. Being now comparatively safe, I slept and

rested for a few hours, then continued my tramp over hills and through valleys all day Tuesday. My riding boots were now pretty well used up, and my feet were feeling the effects of the rough journey. With little intervals of sleep, for I was too much excited to sleep any length of time, I continued on all Tuesday night. This was a particularly trying part of the country, as it is one of the worst fever beds in South Africa, and, being near to the coast, is intensely hot. I stopped occasionally amongst the natives and got some food, and, when I became too tired to walk, would lie down on the ground and rest. On Wednesday afternoon I sent a native runner ahead, telling him to go as quickly as possible to Nongoma, the nearest police station, with a message to the police officer in charge. He reached there during the night on Wednesday, and on Thursday morning, shortly after daylight, I was travelling along in the company of a native when we heard the rattle of horses' hoofs. Fearing it might be another company of Boers, we ran a short distance from the path and hid in the long grass under a tree. In a few moments there hove in sight a patrol of Natal Mounted Police. As soon as I recognized them I sprang up, and was received into the open arms of my countrymen. I partook eagerly of the refreshments which they had brought with them, and after a few hours' hard riding arrived in Nongoma.

#### HOMeward BOUND.

I remained at Nongoma for about ten days, and while there I found that my native servants had effected their escape from the Boers during the uproar which followed my own unexpected leave-taking. I also learned that my three companions, who had hidden themselves in the bush when I was taken

prisoner, were safe. I bought a horse and rode on down through Zululand, a distance of about two hundred miles, to the nearest border of Natal, and from there took the train for Durban. During my ride from Nongoma to Natal I was in constant danger from the Boers, as the road runs right along the Transvaal border, and there were small parties of Boers raiding in their own country, quite close to the border. After arriving at Natal I went to Government headquarters at Pietermaritzburg, and offered myself for service at the front; but at that time they were not in need of surgeons, all vacancies having been filled by doctors who were refugees from the Transvaal. As I was anxious to see my native land, I took ship at Durban on the 17th of December, and after a pleasant voyage of four weeks reached London. I reshipped at Liverpool two days afterwards, and arrived safely in dear old Canada on the 27th day of January, thankful after the peril and excitement of my experiences with the Boers to be again among kindred and friends.

## CHARACTER OF THE BOER.

Having given this brief narrative of my experience, I should like to make some reference to the Boer character. A great many people seem to have the idea that the Boer is a very pious individual. I was rather surprised on coming home to find that he had a reputation in this country of being religious, for he certainly has not that reputation in South Africa—that is, the Boer proper. I think what must have given this impression to the people at large is the fact that there is a certain class of Dutch people who have a very strong religious instinct and impulse. But these individuals are



entirely separate and distinct from the Boer himself. The religion of the Boer is nothing more than a kind of mythology, and if you can dissociate the idea of religion from Christianity, and make a religion that will not in any case interfere with the exercise of the evil passions, and allow the man who embraces it to make as his rule of life the indulgence of his passions, then I will grant that the Boer is a religious being. But as we understand religion and Christianity, the Boer is altogether irreligious and unchristian.

I might quote scores of instances to show you the sort of religion the Boers have. It has been a favorite pastime with them to shoot natives. It may be that they believe themselves to be the chosen people of God, and that the black man is given to them for an inheritance; that he is their property, and that they have full power over him, body and soul. At any rate they seem to act toward the poor blacks on that assumption.

When I was in Ladysmith, natives from the Transvaal had been down there and had embraced Christianity. When they returned home they kept beseeching us to send them a missionary who could preach them the gospel and administer the sacrament. We sent a highly educated ordained native. We told him to go to the nearest field cornet and tell him his business. He went. The field cornet took him, tied him to his waggon, and whipped him until he was tired, and then told him to fly for his life or he would shoot him.

Not long ago I was talking to a Boer in Swaziland, and heard from him of the trial of another Boer who had shot a native. At that trial a number of eye-witnesses swore that they had seen the Boer shoot the native. The jury brought the accused in not guilty. I said to this man, who was one of the jurymen, "Did you not know that this man shot the

native?" He said, "Yes, I knew he shot him, but I might shoot a native some day myself." Is this justice? is it humanity? is it in keeping with any religion that has for its basis the revelation of Christ? I say not.

One time I knew a native to be shot—a little farther west than the scene of the shooting just referred to—by a man who found three natives going across his farm. He demanded money from them; two of them paid it and the third had no money, and that man shot the native. The other two came to Ladysmith. The officials took it up, and the report received was that the man was an official and nothing more could be done.

BRITONS *versus* BOERS.

If you are riding along the beautiful veldt and over the magnificent sunny hills of that country, you may see in the distance a clump of trees, and as you approach you find a neat and tidy farmhouse, with a well-kept little garden. Go there any day in the year, at Christmas or in the middle of July, and you will find beautiful flowers and vegetables flourishing about that homestead. When you meet the people you find they are English people — Britons. But if you travel in another direction you will suddenly come upon what to all appearances is a pile of stones, but which as you approach you find to be the four walls of a small house. I am speaking now of the habitation of the ideal Boer, not of the highly educated Dutch who have been under British rule for three or four generations. There is hardly anything to mark the spot but the bare stones. And it is about as bad inside as it is outside. You are just as apt to talk to them in Zulu as in Dutch. In fact, they are as likely to converse among

themselves in Zulu as in their own language. My experience in four and a half years amongst them is that hardly in three cases in succession will you find them speaking any particular language. First you will hear them speaking Dutch, then you will see one of them meet another man and to him—also a Boer—he will talk Zulu. So far as my own personal contact with them was, they did not seem to have any decided language of their own.

#### HABITS OF THE BOERS.

The Boer man is a rather dilapidated looking individual at the best of times. He has never used a razor in his life, and to look at his face you would say he has never washed in his life. I have on various occasions seen him make the attempt, but it has always been a failure. He hates water like the proverbial cat, and the only bath he is treated to the year round is the involuntary one when a soaking thunder-storm drenches him or he happens to fall into a river.

When the Boers retire, whether to sleep on the ground or on their beds, their clothes remain on them, and it is reported on good authority that they never change their clothes from the time they put them on until they are worn out. I have not been among them sufficiently to state that that is positively true, but it has been told to me by those who should know.

In conclusion, let me say that after having lived amongst these people four and a half years, having practised medicine amongst them, visiting them in their homes, and having felt and known something of the throbbings and groanings of South Africa after liberty, I cannot but feel an intense personal interest in the tremendous struggle now going on—one of the

greatest struggles of the present century. It is not a conflict of Britain for gold. It has never been the practice of Britain, and never will, I hope, be her practice, to fight for gold or for the glory of arms. But at the present moment all eyes, from Canada to Australia, and from India to Egypt, are turned upon South Africa, and all are looking with anxious expectation for the result. What will it be? There can be but the one result, the final triumph of British arms. The old order must give way to the new. That splendid country must be redeemed from the misrule of a tyrannical oligarchy. Let us hope the outcome will be all that the interests of Christianity and civilization and British hearts could desire; that in the near future the racial hatred which has cursed that country for three generations may be blotted out, and that the different states and colonies may be welded into one glorious Dominion, and British supremacy be forever established.